



# Tradeshow Planning Guide



Exhibiting at trade shows is a great way to market your brand and build relationships. Live events allow you to showcase products and services to highly-targeted individuals, learn about current trends in your industry, and see what your competitors are doing. The real value of course, is to foster relationships with customers and prospects both on and off the show floor.

## To Begin With...

Trade shows can be an expensive way to market. From booth space to drayage, rigging and shipping, trade shows can get expensive if you do not plan ahead. Taking the time to strategically plan and prepare for a show improves your chance at achieving your sales and marketing goals.

This checklist will help you prepare for a successful exhibiting experience at a trade show by outlining common “to-do” items in the months leading up to and after the show. Use this checklist as a general template for your event marketing program, but be sure to contact show management for each of your events for actual deadlines and important dates. Every trade show is different, but using a common checklist will help you standardize the way you plan, execute and measure your trade show program.



## 2021 TIPS

Be sure to have Hand Sanitizer available throughout the booth. Disinfection protocols should also be employed to show that you are considerate of your visitors and staffers.

Avoid handing out give-aways or brochures. Fulfill collateral requests electronically via email. If you have a high-end give away simply mail it to your prospect after the event.

Consider appointing a particular person to drive Safety implementation and giving that position a specific title, e.g. Chief Hygiene Officer, etc. This helps create status, focus, and clarity and shows clients, visitors and other stakeholders the importance and emphasis you place on health safety efforts and attaining a ‘controlled environment.’



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EXHIBITS AND  
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Early bird rates for exhibitors typically expire four to six months before the show. These rates are about 5-10% lower than standard rates.

Sometimes you also should consider signing up for “association memberships” in order to benefit from deep discounts provided to members-only on exhibit space.

Some shows assign seniority to incumbent exhibitors and encourage contracting a year in advance at a discounted rate. Make sure to book early, because space can fill up extremely fast.



Project your costs in these categories of expenses:

- Booth Space
- Material Handling (drayage)
- Electrical (if required)
- Lea Capture
- Shipping to and from the show
- Carpet/flooring (if required)
- Rental furniture or A/V equipment
- Installation and dismantle (if required)
- Rigging for hanging structure(s) (if required)
- Booth costs (rent or purchase)
- Airfare for booth staff
- Lodging for booth staff
- Marketing campaign and sales expenses for dinners pre and post-show awareness campaigns

For a quick reference planning tool, download **Apogee's free timeline Generator Here:**

Incorporate a virtual component to your exhibit to promote your presence to those not in attendance. The hybrid/virtual model is here to stay so embrace it and use it as a sales and marketing tool for pre-show promotions. A virtual showcase or environment can be a useful selling tool to use to keep prospects engaged about your products or services.

While attendance may be reduced in 2021 and early 2022, your audience may indeed actually be more qualified to make decisions and purchases. Most C-Level executives will be traveling earlier than others with less qualified decision making power. This is a time to leverage this when engaging your audience. The percentage of qualified decision makers will never be higher.

Consider adding an increased digital marketing effort to engage those attendees that may not be able to be in-person. Do this through online events such as webinars, contests, and increased digital advertising and promotion of your event.





# 4 Months Out (or sooner)



## Connect with your exhibit solutions partner

To ensure that you have an effective exhibit in time for the event, be sure to connect with an exhibit solutions partner to discuss your exhibit and display needs and requirements. If you do not have an exhibit partner, meet with and interview two to three to determine which one best understands your goals and visions and who is also most capable of delivering the ideal exhibit solution for your needs.

## Develop your marketing plan

Begin planning your marketing and promotional program for before, during and after your event. This plan will be your road map for driving qualified visitors to your booth and converting those visitors into new clients.

Virtual/Hybrid events are here to stay so be sure to plug into your Exhibit house to explore a virtual booth/landing page, to help promote your presence to those that may not be attending, or that may have missed your event

To find out how Apogee Exhibits can help  
you create and manage a virtual/hybrid event  
Contact us:

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# 3 Months Prior

This period of time lays the groundwork for the months leading up to a successful event.

Finalize your exhibit purchase, booth design and graphics.

Depending on the size and complexity of your exhibit, it can sometimes take more than 60 days to design, build and deliver a trade show display. If you need a new exhibit or need changes to an existing exhibit, be sure to begin the exhibit design process with your exhibit partner well in advance of your show date.

## 2021 TIPS

### **Illuminating sustainability.**

Explore incorporating environmental features into a booth to engage eco-conscious visitors. LED, LCD and other light technologies that consume less energy than other alternatives can support that messaging.

### **Colored lighting.**

Lighting with a hint of color can help your display create the effect you want to have on visitors. Adding orange for warmth, for example, helps make a product display more inviting. A tinge of blue can amplify your message that a product is especially cutting-edge.

### **Update existing features.**

In addition to illuminating your display, lighting fixtures themselves add to the overall look—and, if outdated, they also can take away from the appearance. Consider replacing outdated fixtures with more stylish ones.





## 3 Months Prior

### Furnishings and exhibit accessories

From couches to garbage cans to floral arrangements, booth furnishings must typically be reserved at least two weeks before the show. Early bird discounts often provide savings to orders well in advance.

### Begin pre-show marketing

While it may feel early to begin pre-show marketing, tactics, such as inviting prospective clients to the show or renting the show registration list to scout qualified visitors, are highly effective at attracting qualified persons to your booth. It will also ensure that booth staff can focus on qualified traffic who are already familiar with your brand.

Use emails, social media, website content, advertising in related publications and more to begin communicating your participation in the show. An integrated and multi-touch point marketing campaign is the best strategy for reaching your audience.

### Special show events and programs

Determine if the show offers listings and ads in the show directory, special event sponsorships, product showcases, aisle banners, branding marketing sponsorships or awards. Many special programs have deadlines 60-90 days before an event, so evaluating these programs early will ensure that you maximize your exposure and participation benefits at the show.

#### 2021 TIPS

##### **Harness product insights.**

When talking to attendees, ask them questions about your products, services, and their individual experiences with various issues your items are designed to address. You can use AI to track and analyze responses, then use that information to inform future business decisions.

##### **Gauge booth effectiveness.**

A quick exit survey can serve as an easy, effective way to determine if your booth is connecting with visitors the way you want it to. Digitally delivered surveys lead to easier collection for your company, and a less intrusive experience for attendees.

##### **Power up your sales.**

Used strategically, AI can help make your sales efforts more effective. It can help your sales staff use visitor information to pinpoint strong leads, better convert leads to actual sales, tailor follow-up messaging and more.







# 2 Months Prior

The two months leading up to your event are critical for arranging booth setup, staffing, show services and more

## Shipping:

Shipping to the advanced warehouse is the most cost effective way to transport your exhibit.

Advanced warehouse is an off-site warehouse where exhibitor freight is stored until show set-up begins. Shipping to the advanced warehouse ensures that your materials are secure and guarantees that the materials will be moved to your booth space before installation teams arrive.

You also reduce costlier risks, such as marshaling yard fees and overtime installation charges if the booth materials are late. The window of time in which materials may arrive at the advanced warehouse is typically 45-60 days before a show. With the current supply chain and transportation shortages due to the pandemic, be sure to allow for ample transit times.

## Install and Dismantle:

For larger booths that require professional installation and dismantling services, early bird deadlines typically expire 45-60 days before the show. Ask your exhibit solutions partner to provide you with setup instructions and line drawings of your exhibit so the installation and dismantle teams can effectively estimate the project and avoid unforeseen (and unbudgeted) costs at the show. Often, the exhibit partner will estimate this as a service offering, giving you one less item to coordinate.



## 2021 TIPS

### Practice makes perfect.

Before an event, make sure your team has the time to visit with the product design team and ask them practical in-depth questions about the product or service. The team should also become experts on your competition's products to be able to quickly respond to questions about their offering, pick apart their limitations and highlighting how your product is a better fit.

### Rejection vs. Objection.

The best salespeople understand the difference between a "rejection" and an "objection." The person who rejects your pitch will be a very tough sale, perhaps not even worth the time for further engagement. The person who objects is likely a "maybe." Chances are the prospect is on the fence, and that means you have an opportunity. Overcoming objections is a skill every elite salesperson possesses, so make sure you keep yourself in the game and don't mistake a "maybe" for a "no".

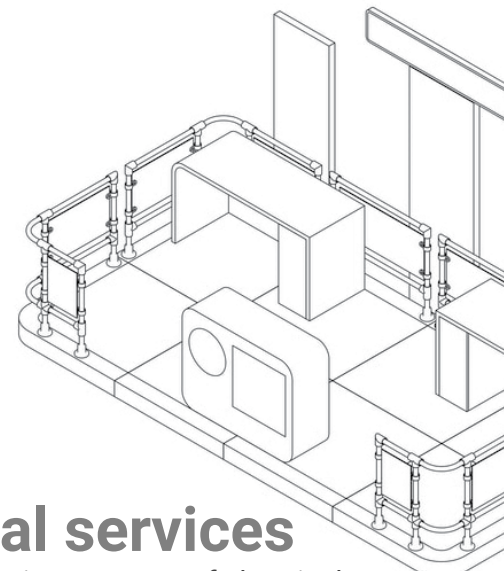




# 2 Months Prior

When hundreds of companies are exhibiting at the same trade show, they have to compete for the time and attention of event attendees. To maximize their chances of attracting visitors, more organizations are opting for a [customized trade show display](#).

Choose an Experiential Marketing Partner that not only can help implement effective face-to-face marketing strategy, but can also design, build, and manage your exhibits.



## Electrical services

If your booth requires any sort of electrical power, you must order electrical drops. If complex, electrical services may require an electrical drawing of your booth, which shows where the main electrical drop should be placed, the required wattage and the locations of needed outlets. Note that, for safety and insurance reasons, many shows will not let you use your own extension cords. Instead, these must be ordered through electrical services.



## Rigging services

Some booths require that hanging signs or other exhibit elements are rigged to the event hall ceiling or ceiling beams. This includes hanging signs and sometimes tall or unsupported exhibit structures. Ask your exhibit partner for line drawings of any elements of your booth that require rigging, as this will need to be shared with the rigging contractor to receive an accurate estimate.



## Check the rules...

Each show has specific rules or restrictions for exhibitors, such as booth height restrictions or maximum hanging sign height. If your exhibit breaks one of these rules, you can submit a request for variance to show management. These requests are typically due at least 60 days prior to the show start date.



## 2 Months Prior

### MARKETING

#### Lead retrieval machines

These essential machines vary from show to show, but reservations must typically be made 45-60 days before the show to take advantage of lower “early bird” rates.

#### Giveaways

If in-booth giveaways are part of your marketing plan, be sure to order your giveaways well in advance to ship with the exhibit material, if possible.

#### Pre-show marketing

Continue following your pre-show marketing plan to build buzz and excitement around your presence in the show.

### STAFF

#### Booth attire

If you plan to have your booth staff wear matching, or branded attire, order at least 60 days in advance. This will allow time to distribute attire to staff and handle any re-orders for different sizes.

#### Hotel and flight reservations

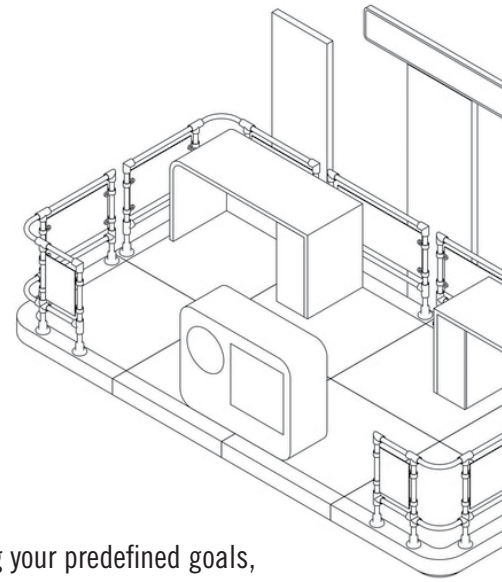
If you have not done so already, be sure to book hotel and flight reservations for your booth staff. It is ideal to book at least 60 days in advance in order to secure the lowest rates.

#### Staff transportation, events and entertainment

Make reservations ahead of time for any staff events and transportation. Even securing a transportation service from the airport to the hotel will save on costs and make life easier for your booth staff.



# 1 Month Prior (30 days)



The month leading up to an event is always busy, but staying organized and using your predefined goals, budget and marketing plan will help focus your planning efforts.

## BOOTH ACCESSORIES

### Wi-Fi and internet

These services are typically purchased through the show site. There may be early bird deadlines, so be sure to check with show management. Be sure to explore if the internet provided by the show is going to support your internet needs. Some third-party vendors offer internet services that can be less expensive than those provided by the venue.

### A/V equipment

If you need to rent A/V equipment for the show, the deadline to do so is typically two weeks before the event to avoid premium charges. Purchasing is, at times, less costly, but remember – if you buy – test the equipment and ensure it ships with the booth to the advanced warehouse. Be sure to have a back up plan in the event your AV equipment fails or your content doesn't play.

## MARKETING

### In-booth materials

Ship your in-booth materials – such as brochures, catalogs and giveaways – to the show site or to your booth staffs hotel. These items, if included with your exhibit materials, may be damaged or lost, so shipping them separately will allow for more peace of mind. A note about Brochures. Studies by Exhibitor Magazine show that nearly 80% of printed collateral never leaves the show city. Consider fulfilling brochure requests electronically.

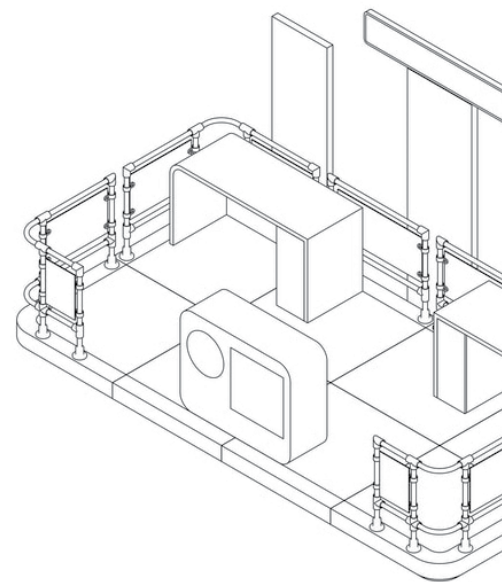
### Pre-show marketing

Don't stop now! Keep following your pre-show marketing plan in the days leading up to the show. Use scheduled email blasts, social media promotions and sponsored content to stay in touch.





# 1 Month Prior (30 days)



## BOOTH SERVICES

### Drayage (material handling)

Every exhibitor's favorite expense - drayage - is the cost of moving your booth materials from the advanced warehouse or ship-to-show site to your actual booth space. Fees are based on weight of the packaging of your exhibit materials. Ask your exhibit solutions partner for the weight of your exhibit's shipping containers, as this will be needed when ordering drayage. Ordering ahead of time can sometimes save on cost.

### Storage

If you need secure storage out of your booth, now is the time to research this. There's usually a fee associated.

### Security

For exhibitors with valuable, unmovable exhibit elements (such as large machinery), it may be wise to order security services so as to avoid any theft or damage to your exhibit or products.

### Booth cleaning

Booth cleaning services help refresh your exhibit after a long day of visitors. If you do not plan on ordering booth cleaning services, be sure to provide your booth staff with basic cleaning products and a vacuum/Swiffer in the event of spills or dirt. In the post-covid world it's wise to employ a booth ambassador to wipe down and disinfect your booth at regular intervals.

**Explore Facility and Booth Disinfection products at our Environments Site**





# Have a great show!

When hundreds of companies are exhibiting at the same trade show, they have to compete for the time and attention of event attendees. To maximize their chances of attracting visitors, more organizations are opting for a [customized trade show display](#).

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## 2021 TIPS

### **Make your brand the star.**

While planning and designing your trade show display, keep your product and your goals for exhibiting at the core of discussions. Those factors will inform your booth plans and help ensure the design supports your aims.

### **Consider simplicity.**

Too often, booth designers are tempted to cover every surface with brand graphics and sales messages, leading to the "NASCAR effect." A more streamlined, simple approach might be more effective in drawing and retaining visitors.

### **Keep comfort in mind.**

A trade show can be grueling for attendees. When customizing your booth, consider incorporating lounge areas, plush carpet, a refreshment bar and other elements that give visitors a respite from the hustle and bustle.

## Making Tomorrow's Trends Work for You Today

Knowing what trade show trends are on the horizon is a great start toward building your exhibit. To effectively apply these trends, it is important to know your trade show goals, your target audience, industry and product. Armed with that knowledge, your company and your trade show partner can get to work on creating a display that attracts attention, engages visitors, and helps you achieve your goals.

To find out how Apogee Exhibits can help you create your next exhibit, contact us today.

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